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ELIZABETHAN SHIP MODEL BY
HENRY B. CULVER IN APPLIED ARTS EXHIBITION

DELACROIX'S DANTE AND VIRGIL

THE similarity between Delacroix's famous painting of "Dante and Virgil" in the Louvre and a smaller painting of identically the same theme in the Potter Palmer Collection leads to the assumption that the painting at the Institute is one of the forty or more studies made for the larger painting. The painting in the Potter Palmer Collection came from the painter Samuel Colman who acquired it from the Taylor Johnson collection.

The well-known French art patron and writer, Moreau-Nélaton, who owned Delacroix's journal, writes as follows in regard to this picture in his *Delacroix*: "In 1821.....Delacroix (now in his studio at 22 rue de la Planche) was 'leading a dog's life,' remaining twelve or thirteen hours a day, palette in hand, before a large canvas six feet high by six and a half feet wide. He had resolved that he would appear at the next Salon with a work which would command attention. The subject

was borrowed from Dante's *Inferno*. The poet and his guide, the divine singer of the *Aeneid*, embarked on the skiff of Phlegyas, are crossing the lake bathing the sinister walls of the city of Dis. The boat was getting steadily heavier from the weight of the unfortunates who clutched it frantically, and among whom the traveler to his great terror recognized several familiar faces. The work, aided by careful studies, was treated in Géricault's somewhat sombre key. A powerful individuality, however, was piercing through that influence to which he was involuntarily submitting.

Guérin, Delacroix's master, was invited to examine the picture in the latter's studio and was not entirely satisfied with it. To him it had nothing but defects. He did not conceal his opinion that Delacroix was courting failure and that if he exhibited the canvas he would be doing so at his own risk and without his master's consent.

"The jury fortunately looked at it with different eyes. The canvas was favorably received and hung in the Salon Carré. The artist's slender budget prevented him from providing it with an appropriate frame, but one of the judges had it sent to his own framemaker. This enthusiastic and generous judge was Gros. He had conceived a passion for Delacroix's work. Thirty-five years later, the beginner of that day, having himself become a master, did not forget how his budding genius had been received by the man whose powerful virtuosity he idolized, and it was with pleasure that he referred to the older man's sufficient sympathy thus:

"A fortunate circumstance enabled me to meet Gros, who, learning that I was the author of this painting, paid me such effusive compliments that ever since I have been impervious to all flattery. When he had called attention to all the merits of the painting, he finally told me it was a chastened Rubens. For one who adored Rubens and had been



DANTE AND VIRGIL—PAINTING BY EUGENE DELACROIX IN POTTER PALMER
COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS

brought up in David's school, this was the highest conceivable praise. He asked me if he could do something for me. So at once I asked him to let me see his famous Empire pictures, since the subject was proscribed at that time.'

"In spite of the success of the picture with the jury, it was not accepted without struggle. The critics vehemently discussed it. The entirely too famous Delécluze ridiculously characterized the work as a disgrace because the sense of it escaped him. His emulator, Landon, criticised Delacroix because he was a mere copyist. Fortunately for the honor of the artistic press, the newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* published an article by Adolphe Thiers in which due honor was paid the work as follows:

"No picture was ever destined to reveal the future of a great artist more than M. Delacroix's *Dante and Virgil in inferno*. Here one can witness the gushing forth of spontaneous talent. . . . The author possesses both poetic and artistic inspiration of a high order. He throws his figures, and groups and bends them with the boldness of a Michelangelo and the fecundity of a Rubens."

"Thiers was not in himself capable of so sagacious an appreciation of a work of art, but he listened with profit to a man whose authority he judged to be unimpeachable and repeated the praise he had heard from Baron Gérard's mouth, who, being acquainted with Delacroix's family, took a lively interest in the beginner. The writer ended his



FROM THE ATTIC WINDOW—PAINTING BY FELICIE WALDO HOWELL AWARDED
MR. AND MRS. AUGUSTUS S. PEABODY PRIZE IN ANNUAL EXHIBITION

laudatory remarks by these words: 'The opinion I here express is that of one of the grand-masters of the French school.'

"To Thiers is largely due the measure of success Delacroix was permitted to realize in his native field of decorative painting. For a first attempt then, one might call 'Dante and Virgil' a master-stroke. In spite of the vituperations of the critics the public was applauding and Delacroix triumphed. Count Forbin, director of the Museum, put his sanction upon the painter's success by purchasing it for the state for 2400 francs (then about \$400)."

When the painting was first shown at the Salon of 1822, Landon thought it a copy of some unknown Florentine painting, but Delacroix's friend Soulier, that *badaud dans la peau d'un gascon*, found him in the Grand Salon of the

Louvre copying the heads from "Noces de Cana" by Veronese. It is indeed the Veronese and Titian influence which is paramount with Géricault in this early work. Not until later came the period when the master had assimilated Rubens also, and we find the turbulent Fleming married to the sonorous Venetian in his canvases, such as "The Lion Hunt," which may be found on another wall of the gallery in which the "Dante and Virgil" is hanging. Unfortunately for us the journal of Delacroix was not begun until after the Salon success of the "Dante and Virgil" so that we do not know the intimate details of his struggles with and his ultimate triumph over his subject in this instance. From this time he daily and meticulously set down his victories over the pseudo-classicism of David's regime.



IN THE HILLS—PAINTING BY LEON KROLL IN ANNUAL EXHIBITION

The exquisite brush work of our little canvas, its beauty of surface, its faithfulness to the Louvre painting warrants our belief that we possess the final study for the enlarged work. In quality the small canvas is much finer. Time and oxygen, bituminous *fondant*, and the inexorable "official restorer" have not been kind to the Louvre painting. Over-painting and glazing by the non-committal apprentice hand of the painter engaged on his first large Salon essay have done their part. The student or the cultured traveler of today who, Baedecker in hand, has puzzled over the epochal success of the young Delacroix will find the answer here.

MR. HARSHE'S APPOINTMENT

ON October 1 Robert B. Harshe took up his duties as Director of the Art Institute, succeeding George W. Eggers who resigned to become Director of the Denver Art Association. During the past year Mr.

Harshe held the position first of Assistant Director and later of Associate Director, his service to the Institute including the management of the School, the installation of both permanent and temporary exhibitions, and much of the executive work of the Museum.

Mr. Harshe studied at the University of Missouri, Columbia University, the School of the Art Institute, Art Students' League, Colorossi Academy of Paris, Central School of Arts and Crafts of London. He has held the following positions: Supervisor of Manual Arts, Columbus, Georgia; Instructor of Fine Arts, University of Missouri; Assistant Professor of Graphic Arts, Leland Stanford Jr. University; Director of Oakland Public Museum; Assistant Director Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh; Superintendent of Fine, Applied, and Manual Arts, Department of Education, San Francisco Exposition; also Assistant Chief, Department of Fine Arts, and